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# An exploration of rationale behind non submission of final assignment in B100 An Introduction to Business and Management

*Project funded by SCiLAB – The OU Centre for FBL pedagogy. Project Reference No 3.4*

*May 2020*



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# 1. Executive Summary

This report has been funded by SCiLAB to carry out an exploration of rationale behind non submission of final assignment in B100 An Introduction to Business and Management

Most importantly to note first is that 100% of the students interviewed for this research project who were unsuccessful in completing B100, were unable to complete due to exceptional life circumstances that were completely external to the module. 100% of unsuccessful students reported high satisfaction for the module and all students who failed to complete B100 have every intention of returning to The Open University once they are able to do so. Out of all the students who were unable to complete the module, they all stopped studying due to several significant life events happening at the same time that were impacting their time and ability to study.

All students in this research study reported high satisfaction for B100, however, they have also provided feedback that can contribute to significant improvements to the module.

From analysis of SAS VA student progression reports and module dashboard data; ALs' and students' feedback and forum data analysis, the following five key themes have emerged as areas to focus on for improvement:

- Assessment
- Course Calendar
- Forums
- Induction and Study Skills Support
- Tutorials

Key recommendations have been made to address issues within these five areas and are listed in section 8 of this report. In summary, it is recommended:

- The format of TMAs is reviewed with informal micro-assessments being introduced for students to receive interim feedback from tutors in the lead up to a TMA submission. This would provide confidence to students to complete the TMA and feel less pressured, having received some informal feedback in advance. It is also recommended that alternative options to a traditional essay format are provided to students.
- The course calendar is reviewed to ensure that each presentation has the same number of study weeks to avoid some presentations having three less study weeks to complete the module. TMA deadlines to be more evenly distributed.
- It is recommended that the B100 team examine strategies on other B-modules, for example B208 and integrating forum activities more closely into the teaching and strengthening some of the instructions so that it's clear to students what they do in the forum. Another possibility would be to add some more exercises or activities (e.g.

quizzes). B208 have assessment builder activities which may be useful for B100 to adopt.

- Operate an induction for new students to introduce business concepts and theories and begin making use of technology, such as building confidence in the use of OU forums. Support the development of study skills, in particular, writing skills throughout the module.
- Replace the numerous repetitions of the same tutorial with sessions at the start of the course to support students from a non-business background. Provide a mini bridge to build confidence in business terms. B100 is interdisciplinary, ask ALs to run tutorials according to their specialisms and strengths. Have one tutorial recorded for each study block, not all ALs recording all events. This will provide a shorter recording for those unable to attend and enable live tutorials not to be recorded, which will open up discussion during live sessions without students in fear of being recorded. It also stops the pressure students feel to listen to every recording, which also creates confusion with different language used by ALs. Students preferred to attend live online tutorials, rather than listening to a recording.

## 2. Introduction

B100 changed its assessment strategy from 17B to single component assessment (Model A). The assessment strategy requires that students gain an average of 40% across all 5 TMAs and at least 30% in the final TMA (05) in order to achieve a pass. Figures from 2018J illustrate that 117 students out of 2577 (registered after FLB 1), >5% percent of students failed to submit TMA 05. Most concerningly 108 out of 117 had 40% plus so were on track to pass the module (if they scored 30 in TMA05). The remaining 9 were in the 30-39 bracket so would have been eligible for resubmission providing they had submitted (and not scored at least 30 for it).

Retention and reasons for withdrawal have been studied before on this module (see Glover et al, 2018), and recommendations implemented. However, despite this, the submission rate for TMA 05 has been consistently poor since start of module as illustrated in figure 1. Figure 2 shows B100 TMA05 non submitters. Glover et al (2018) recommended enhanced assessment literacy, a more personalised approach to student feedback and more use to be made of analytics tools, along with, enhanced focus on study skills and opportunities to reflect, and monitoring of TMA 01 submissions and non-submissions. These recommendations were implemented but did not incorporate changes to the latter half of the module.

2018B	B100	TMA02	1,354	84.6%
2018J	B100	TMA02	2,577	82.0%
2019B	B100	TMA02	1,643	80.9%
2019J	B100	TMA02	3,169	0.0%
2016B	B100	TMA03	1,134	75.8%
2016J	B100	TMA03	2,148	77.8%
2017B	B100	TMA03	1,105	77.1%
2017J	B100	TMA03	2,232	76.7%
2018B	B100	TMA03	1,354	74.7%
2018J	B100	TMA03	2,577	73.4%
2019B	B100	TMA03	1,643	71.6%
2019J	B100	TMA03	3,169	0.0%
2016B	B100	TMA04	1,134	71.3%
2016J	B100	TMA04	2,148	75.7%
2017B	B100	TMA04	1,105	69.1%
2017J	B100	TMA04	2,232	69.7%
2018B	B100	TMA04	1,354	66.5%
2018J	B100	TMA04	2,577	67.2%
2019B	B100	TMA04	1,643	65.7%
2019J	B100	TMA04	3,169	0.0%
2016B	B100	TMA05	1,134	60.3%
2016J	B100	TMA05	2,148	66.8%
2017B	B100	TMA05	1,105	67.6%
2017J	B100	TMA05	2,232	67.3%
2018B	B100	TMA05	1,354	65.0%
2018J	B100	TMA05	2,577	63.3%
2019B	B100	TMA05	1,643	61.4%
2019J	B100	TMA05	3,169	0.0%

Figure 1: B100 Submission Rate for TMA05.

Pres	No. of students
2015J	186
2016B	137
2016J	204
2017B	31
2017J	74
2018B	32
2018J	117
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>781</b>

Figure 2: B100 Non Submitters for TMA05.

B100 is a key module for the university, with over 1851 students registered on the B presentation of the module, 70 on the apprenticeship version and 2922 on the J presentation. It has been running since 2015J and is due to enter mid-life review in July 2020. Although satisfaction rates are relatively high its completion rates have shown a slight downward trend since its inception. In 2017 the assessment strategy was changed from an EMA to single component assessment – 5 TMAs . Since then, although the module pass rate

has generally exceeded the BOS average, the actual year on year pass rate has shown a slight decline along with the module completion rate. As follows:

#### Module completion

2016B 60.4 BOS average 60.01

2016J 67.2 BOS average 63.4

2017B 67.1 BOS average 64.3

2017J 67.2 BOS average 63.6

2018B 64.8 BOS average 67.7

2018J 63.0 BOS average 62.2

#### Module Pass

2016B 57.3 BOS average 54.6

2016J 63.9 BOS average 59.7

2017B 65.2 BOS average 62.5

2017J 64.7 BOS average 60.5

2018B 62.2 BOS average 65.7

2018J 59.6 BOS average 58.5

Information from the tutor forum, and SEMS indicates that the latter half of the module, particularly blocks 7 and 8, can pose difficulties for students. This is also reflected in SEAM data.



### 3. Aims, Objectives and Timeline

Due to a small but persistent downturn in pass rate of B100 over the past 4 years, this project aimed to examine:

- a) Why students who have satisfactory performance on the module, (pass) up to TMA 05, fail to submit their final assessment.
- b) What do students/tutors feel in terms of the difficulty of blocks 1-4 as compared to blocks 5-7.
- c) What students/tutors perceive as blocks to learning throughout the module?
- d) What these students aim to do following B100, comparing these aspirations to a control group of students who did submit TMA 05.
- e) Whether TMAs are consistent in terms of look and feel. In order to maximise student performance and assessment, what measures/ enhancements we could adopt if the look and feel is not consistent.
- f) What tutors perceive to be instrumental in failure to submit TMA 05.
- g) Given the investigations, are there actions we should take in terms of content in blocks 5-7 that would enhance retention on the module, and improve the student experience, whilst still adhering to existing learning outcomes and accreditation of learning.

The objectives of the project are to:

- a) Inform mid-life review in July 2020, in terms of content and assessment strategy
- b) Inform interventions by module team, SEMs and ALs before submission of TMA 05
- c) Halt the downward trend in pass rates on B100
- d) Inform assessment strategy on a key undergraduate module.

The duration of the research project was 1 October 2019 – 31 July 2020. The scope of the work was 22 days. The work was distributed as follows:

No of Days	Activity	Date
1	Project launch meeting (face-to-face)	October 2019
1	Online progress review meetings and email correspondence	October 2019 – July 2020
1.5	Ethics application and updates to SRP application. Completion of the HREC form and amendments, following feedback. Student information sheet, student invitation and question list produced.	October 2019
1	Interview protocols devised, slide deck produced	October 2019
0.5	Review of SEAM data results for the B100 and BYFL100 19B presentations.	November 2019
4	Review of SAS VA student progression reports and module dashboard	December 2019
1	Student focus group and one-to-one interviews	January – February 2020
2	Data analysis	March 2020
1	Tutor Focus Groups	April –May 2020
5	Writing up of results	April - May 2020
2	Data Analysis	June 2020
2	Writing up of results	June 2020
	Final report	July 2020

## 4. Methods

A qualitative approach was adopted as follows:

- 1 focus group with 6 students who had successfully completed B100.
- One-to-one interviews with 6 students who did not successfully complete B100.
- 4 focus groups with tutors– B and J presentations.
- An analysis of the AL forum discussion

It was hoped to interview a greater number of students, but despite several calls, students were not forthcoming. The research project took place during the COVID-19 global pandemic which may have had an impact in participants' availability. In addition, quantitative data from the SAS VA student progression reports and module dashboard was also explored.



*“Nothing that we do to, or for, our students is more important than our assessment of their work and the feedback we give them on it. The results of our assessment influence our students for the rest of their lives and careers – fine if we get it right, but unthinkable if we get it wrong.”*

*(Race et al, 2005)*

## 5. Statistics and Observations 18J and 19B

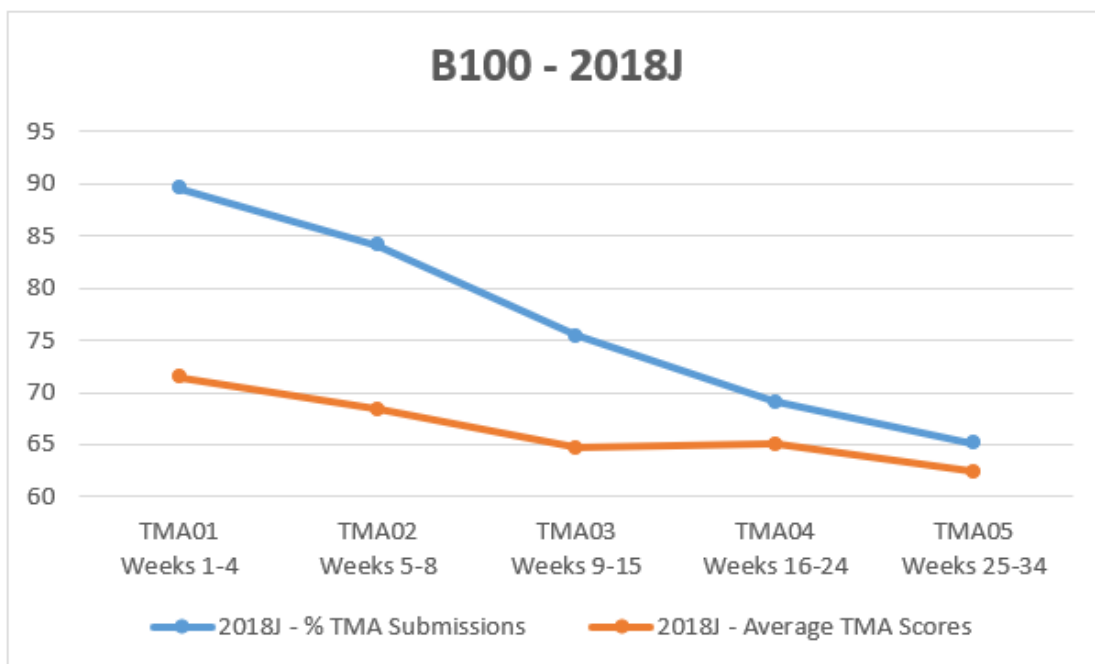
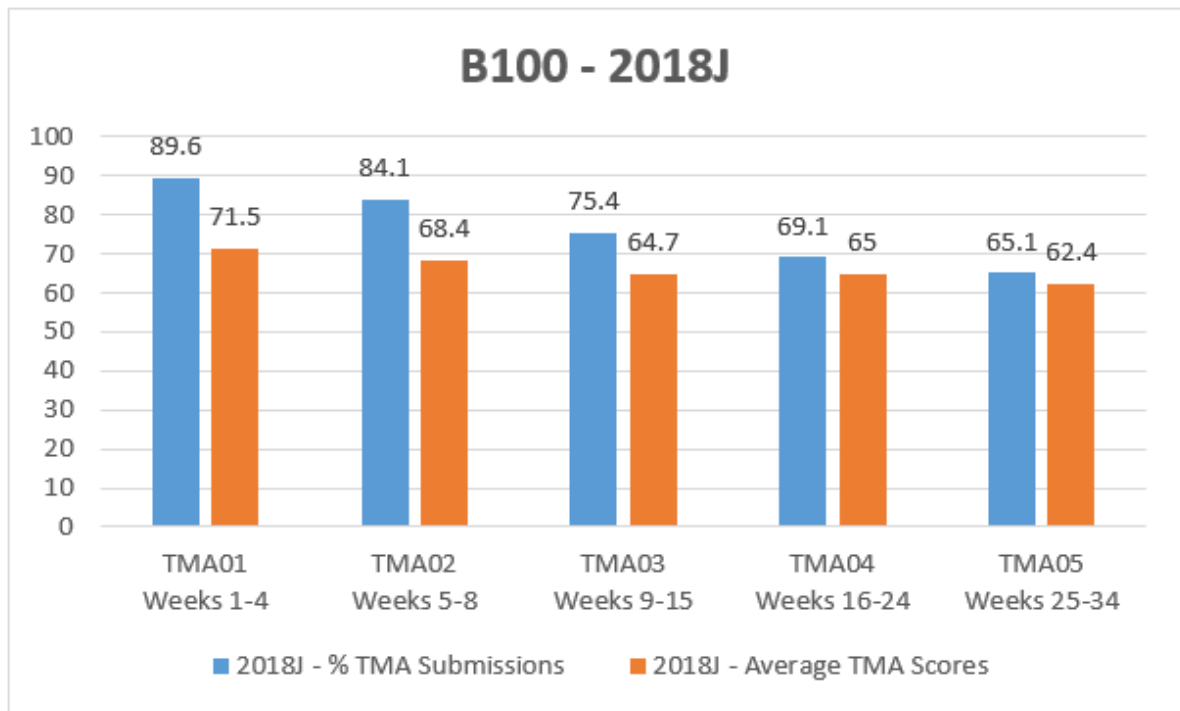
### 5.1 SAS VA student progression reports and module dashboard

This section discusses quantitative data from the SAS VA student progression reports and module dashboard. The following are observations, consistently identified for each course presentation:

- The number of students submitting a TMA consistently decreases between TMA01 to TMA02 and higher again between TMA02 and TMA03. After TMA03, the number of students not submitting reduces.
- The majority of average TMA scores are lower after every TMA during presentations with the exception of TMA04, which sees a rise in the average mark.

	TMA01 Weeks 1-4	TMA02 Weeks 5-8	TMA03 Weeks 9-15	TMA04 Weeks 16-24	TMA05 Weeks 25-34
2018J - Weeks					
2018J - Registered Students (25% FLP)	2505	2505	2505	2505	2505
2018J - TMA Submissions	2244	2106	1889	1731	1632
2018J - % TMA Submissions	89.6	84.1	75.4	69.1	65.1
2018J - % TMA Submissions (TMA Difference)		5.5	8.7	6.3	4
2018J - Average TMA Scores	71.5	68.4	64.7	65	62.4

TMA submission between 75% and 85%
TMA submission less than 75%
Observations

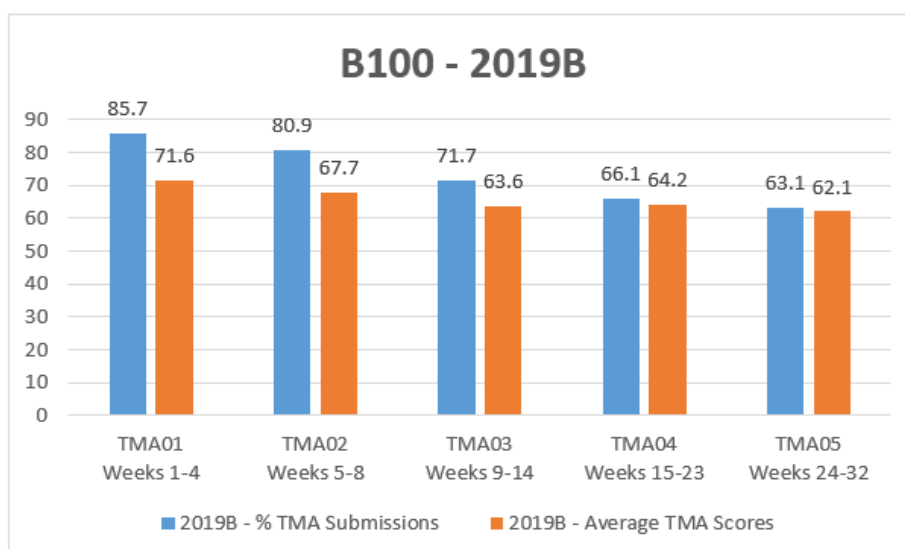


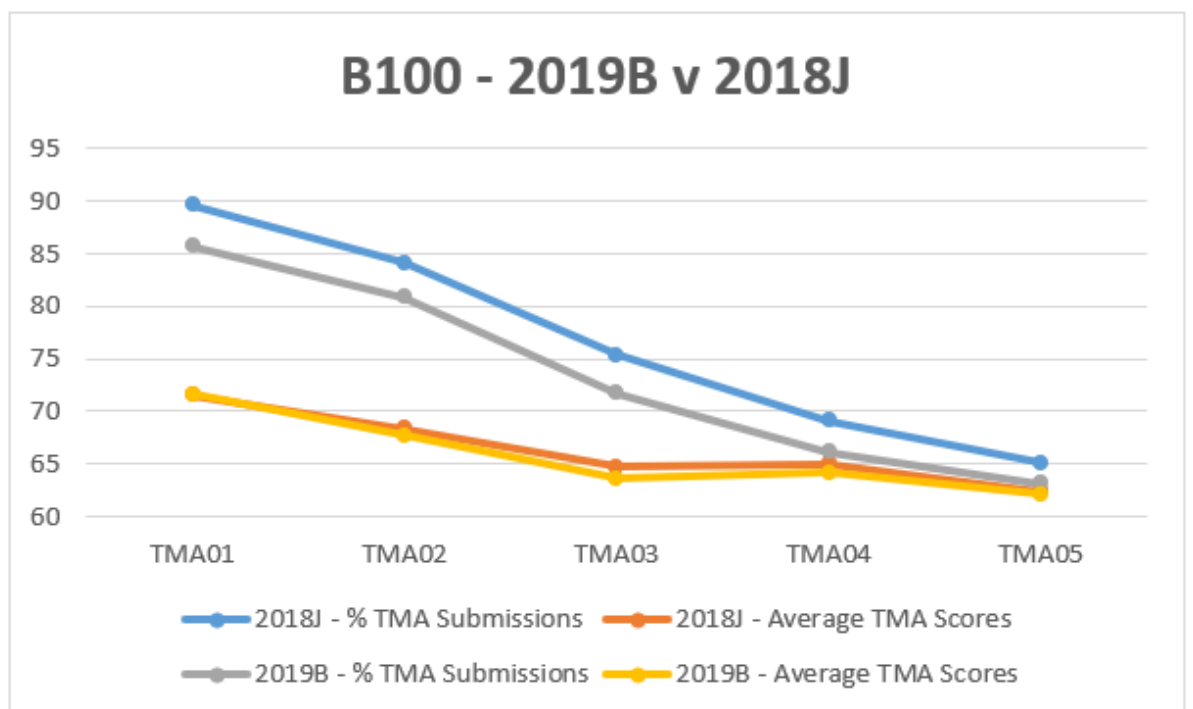
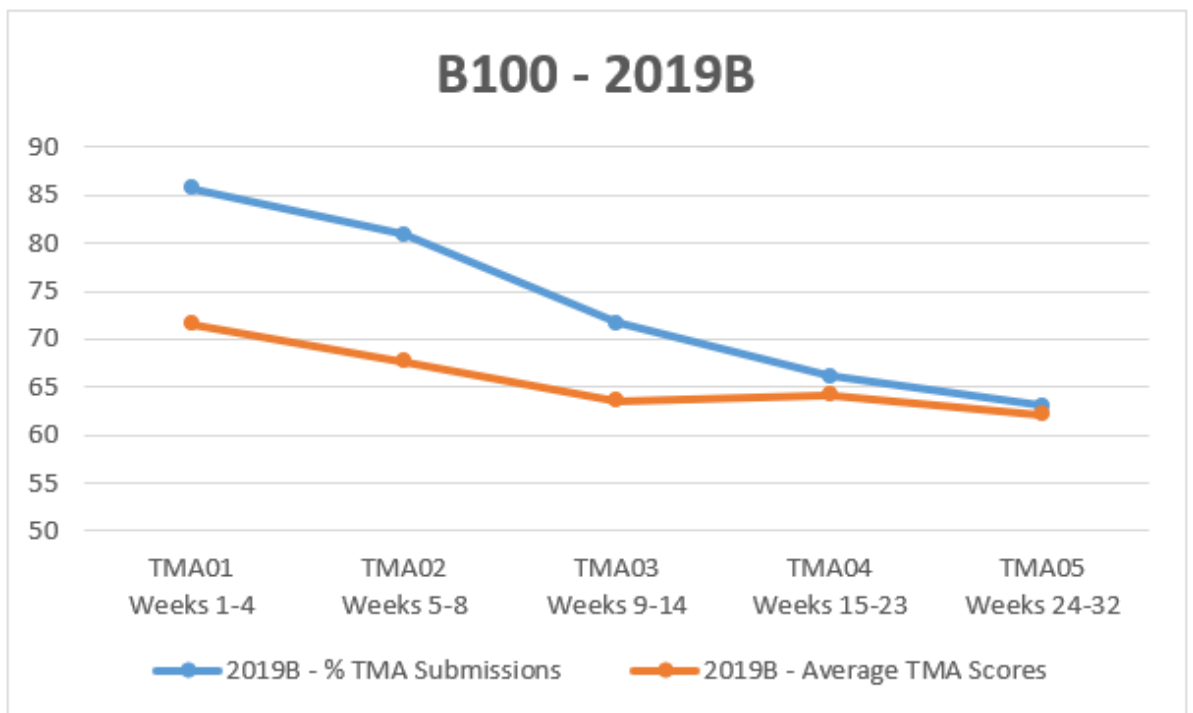
## 2019B

- 2019B saw a worse submission rate with “TMA submission less than 75%” occurring for TMA03 onwards. In 2018J, this red alert occurred from TMA04 onwards.
- In this presentation there is a week less time to complete TMA03, this could be the cause of the low submission value.
- In this presentation there is also less time to complete TMA05 as the presentation ends on week 32, two weeks earlier than the 2018J presentation. This could have a significant impact on students’ ability to submit the final TMA. 2 weeks can make all the difference.
- Average TMA score is lower after every TMA in the presentation with the exception of TMA04
- The average score for TMA01 was higher than in presentation 2018J, all other TMA scores were lower.
- % TMA submission is lower for every TMA when compared to presentation 2018J.

	TMA01 Weeks 1-4	TMA02 Weeks 5-8	TMA03 Weeks 9-14	TMA04 Weeks 15-23	TMA05 Weeks 24-32
2019B - Weeks					
2019B - Registered Students (25% FLP)	1641	1641	1641	1641	1641
2019B - TMA Submissions	1406	1328	1177	1084	1035
2019B - % TMA Submissions	85.7	80.9	71.7	66.1	63.1
2019B - % TMA Submissions (TMA Difference)		4.8	9.2	5.6	3
2019B - Average TMA Scores	71.6	67.7	63.6	64.2	62.1
2019B v 2018J - % TMA Submissions	-3.9	-3.2	-3.7	-3.0	-2.0
2019B v 2018J - Average TMA Scores	0.1	-0.7	-1.1	-0.8	-0.3

TMA submission between 75% and 85%
TMA submission less than 75%
Observations





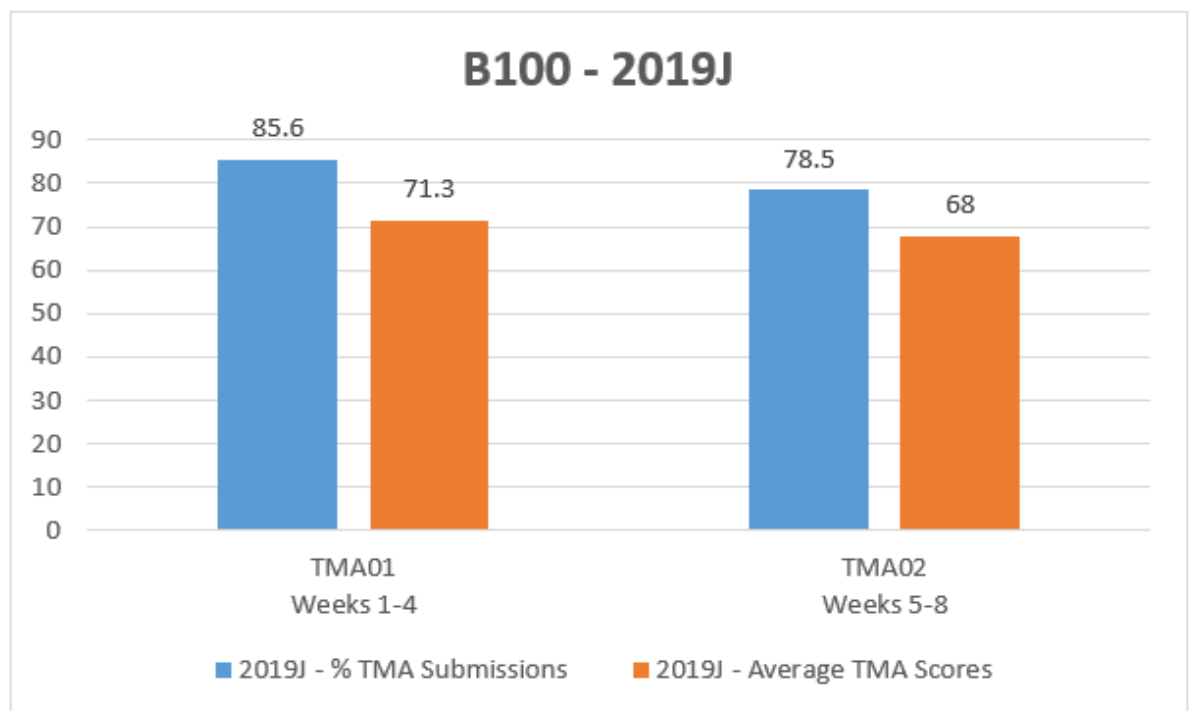


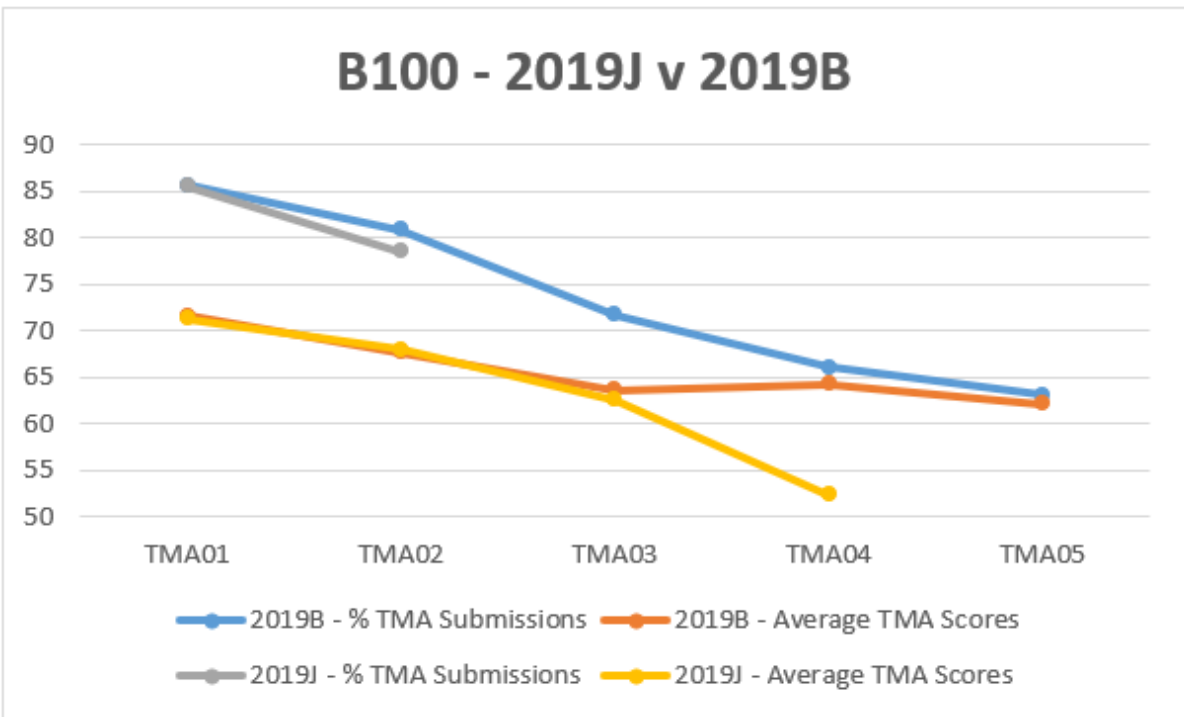
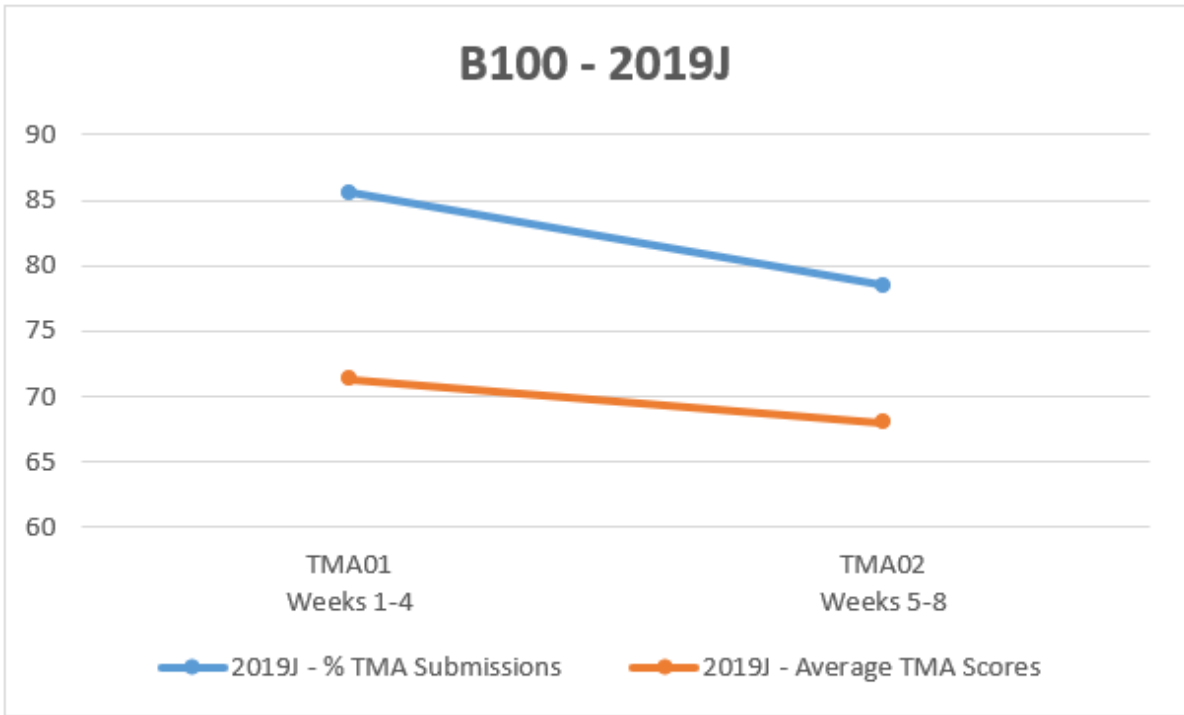
## 2019J

- % TMA submissions have decreased for both TMA01 and TMA02 compared to presentation 2019B
- Average TMA scores are also lower than scores in presentation 2019B, with the exception of TMA02.

	TMA01 Weeks 1-4	TMA02 Weeks 5-8	TMA03 Weeks 9-15	TMA04 Weeks 16-24	TMA05 Weeks 25-34
2019J - Weeks					
2019J - Registered Students (25% FLP)	2851	2851	2851	2851	2851
2019J - TMA Submissions	2441	2238			
2019J - % TMA Submissions	85.6	78.5			
2019J - % TMA Submissions (TMA Difference)		7.1			
2019J - Average TMA Scores	71.3	68	62.5	52.3	
2019J v 2019B - % TMA Submissions	-0.1	-2.4			
2019J v 2019B - Average TMA Scores	-0.3	0.3	-1.1	-11.9	

TMA submission between 75% and 85%
TMA submission less than 75%
Observations

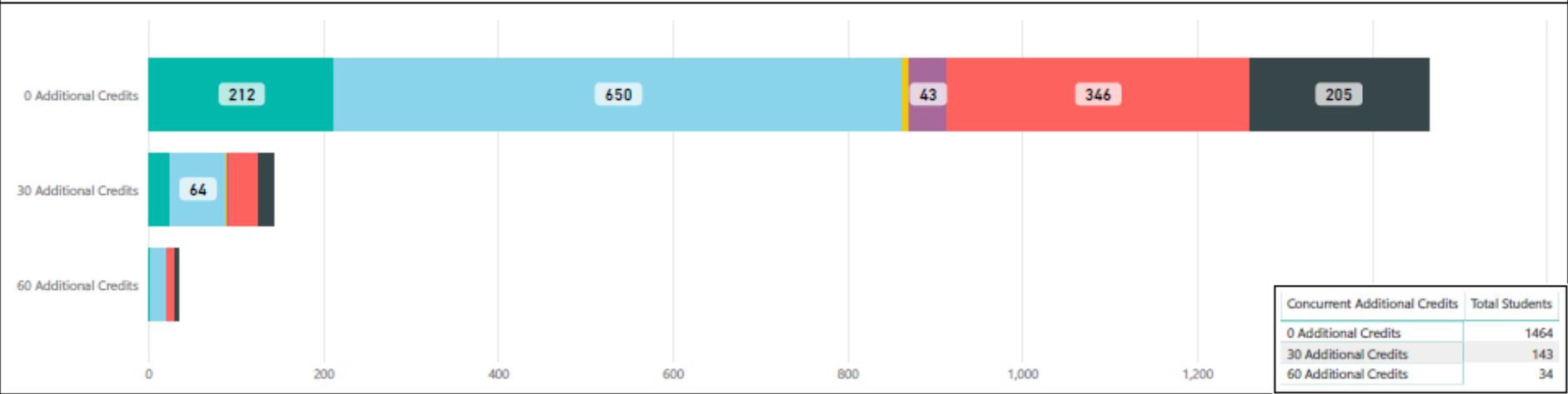
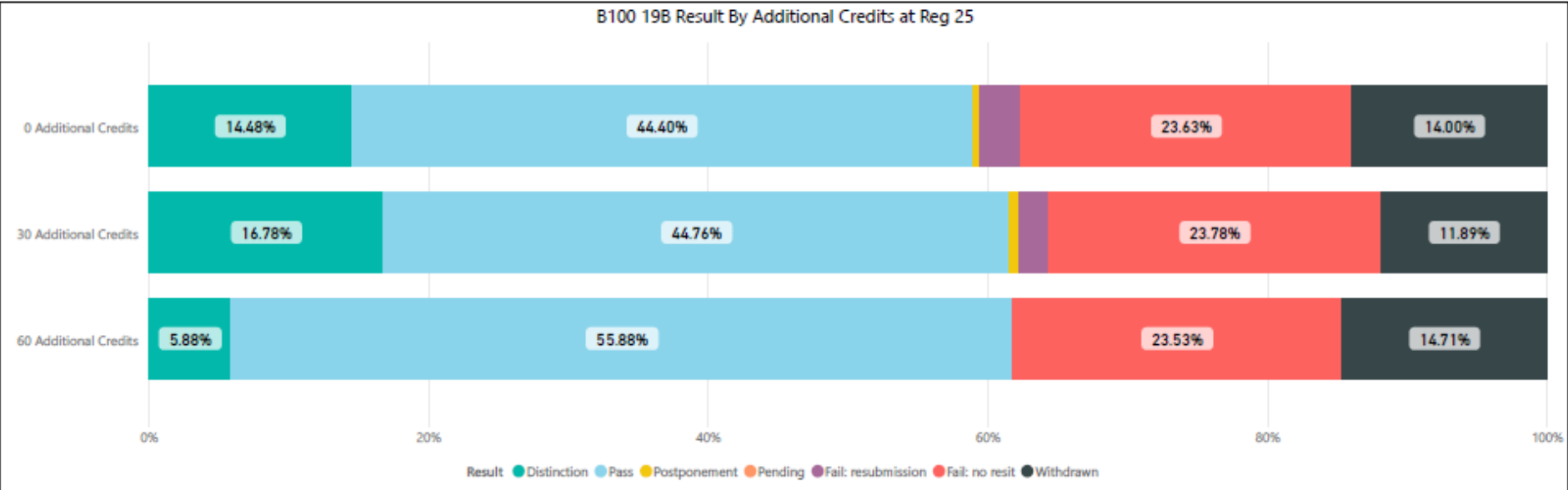




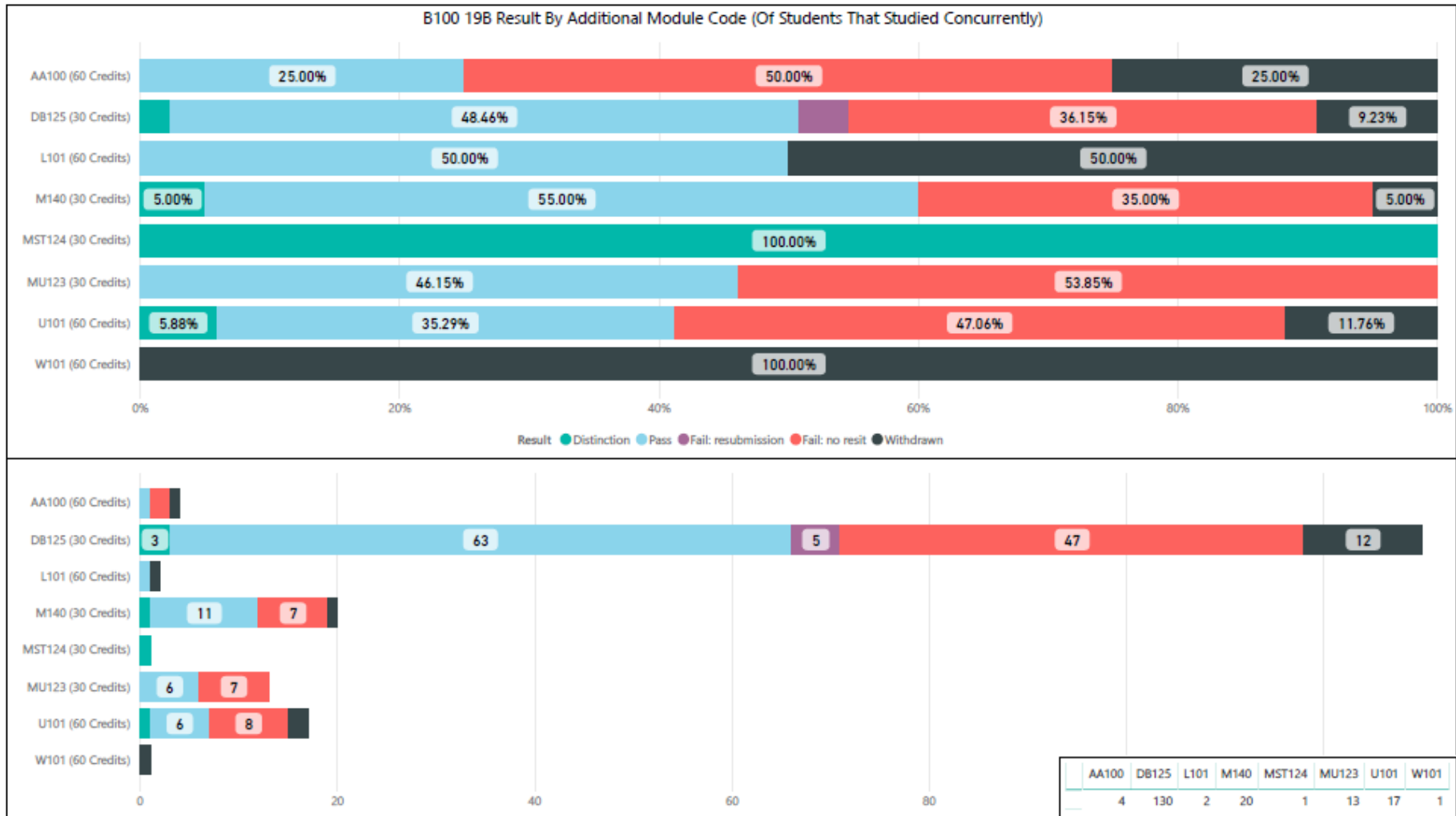
The graph on the next page shows the percentages and numbers of students who have achieved the following results:

- Distinction
- Pass
- Postponement
- Pending
- Fail: resubmission
- Fail: no resit
- Withdrawn

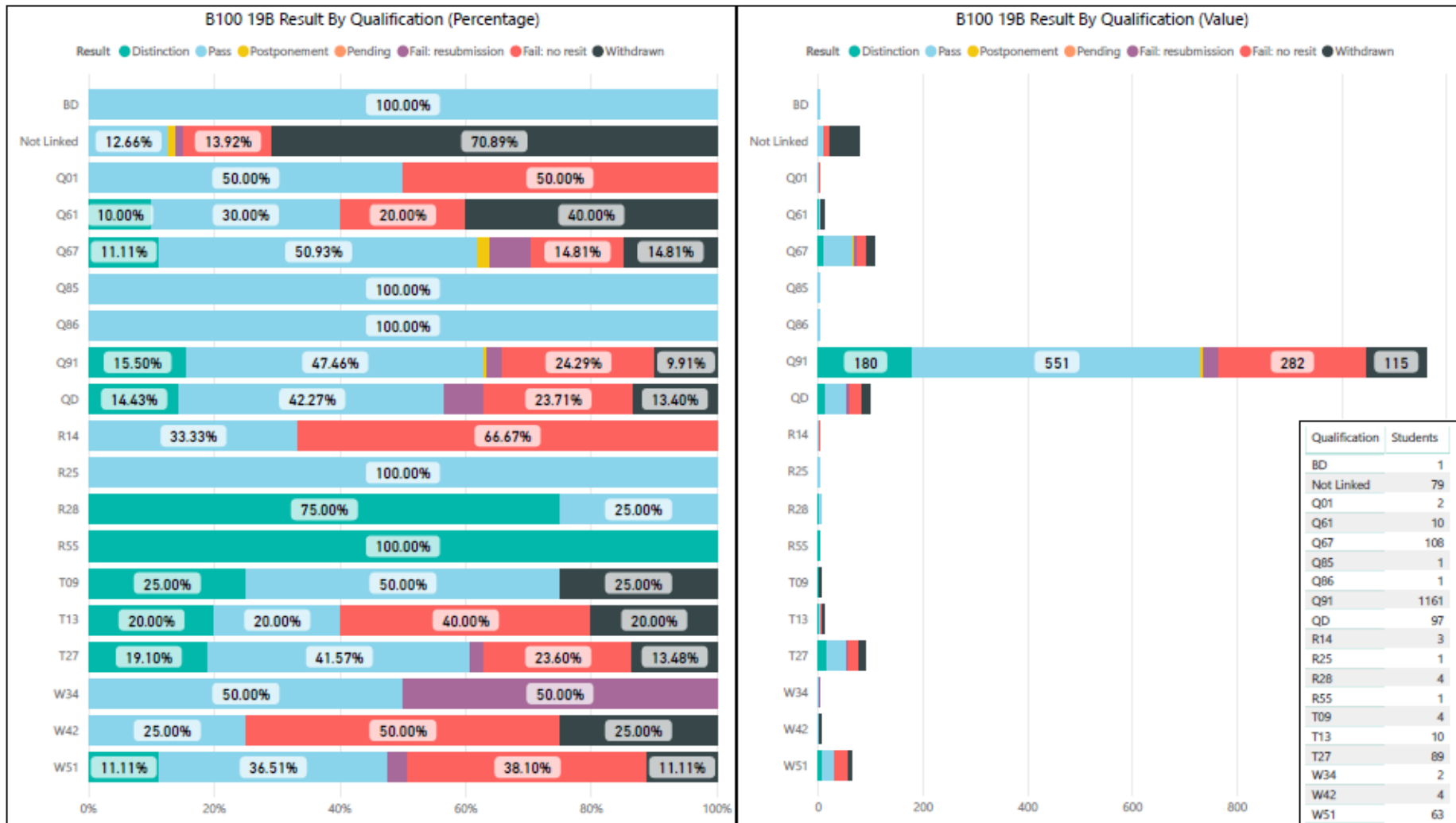
The data is grouped by whether the students studied 0, 30 or 60 additional credits.



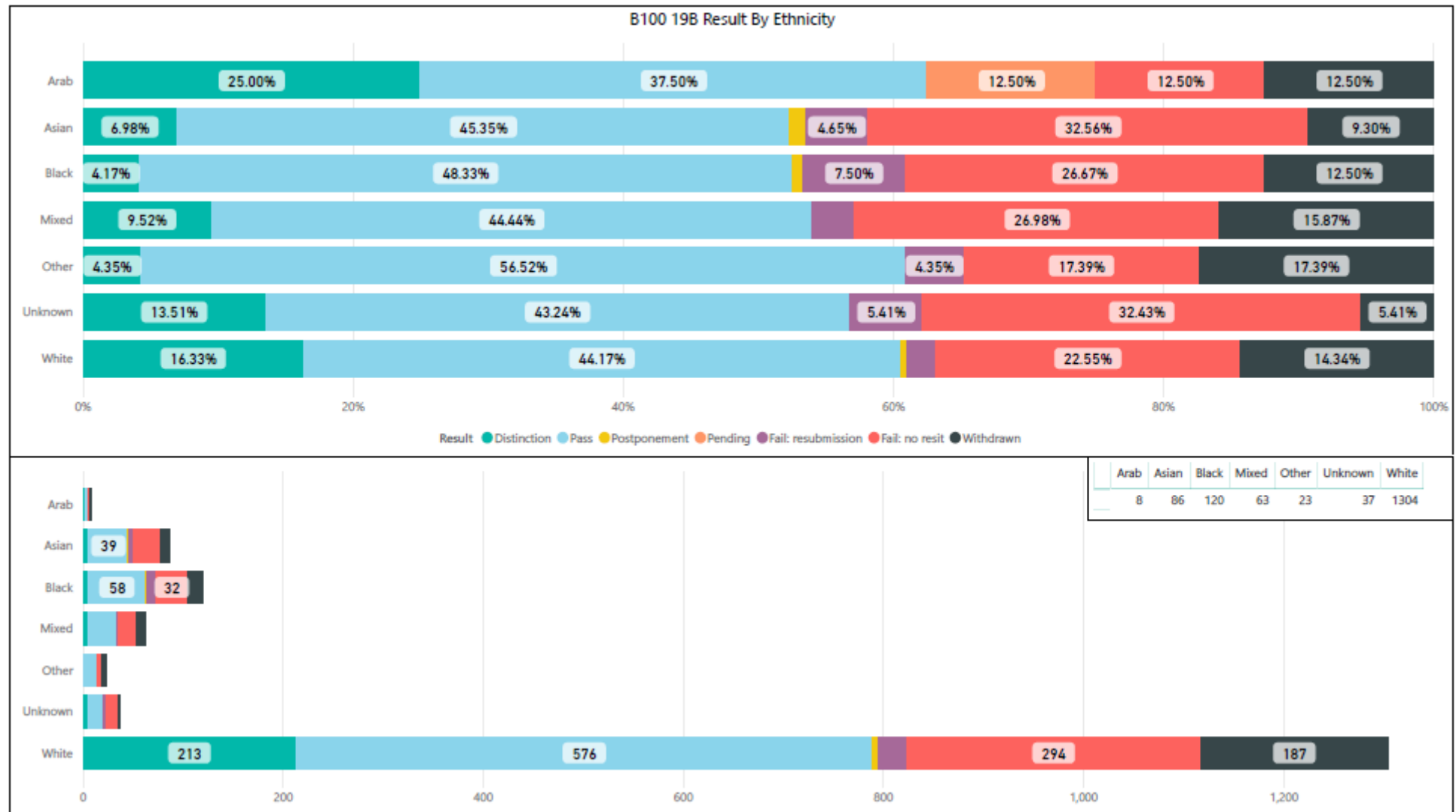
This shows the results but the data is grouped by which module they studied in addition to B100 (DB125 is of most significance). 100 students are doing DB125, which is in the Accounting pathway. This is as expected.



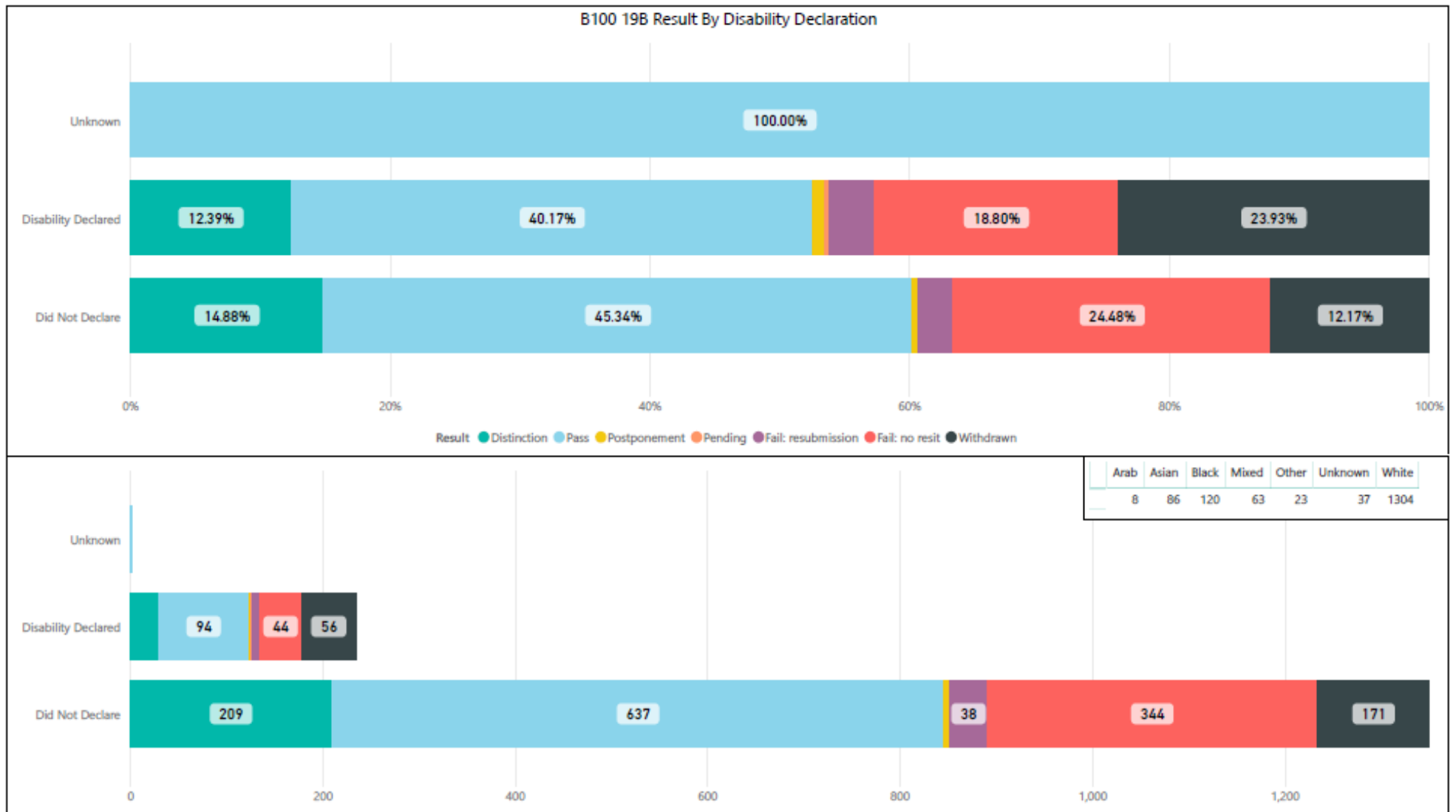
This shows the results with the data grouped by which qualification students are registered for. This helps to identify it is non Q91 students who are failing.



This graph show ethnicity declaration data



This graph shows disability declaration data





## 5.2 SEaM Survey Structure

### 23 Main Questions

- q1: The way the module materials were presented helped to maintain my interest.
- q2: The study workload on this module fitted with my personal circumstances.
- q3: The structure of the module meant I could interact with my peers when learning.
- q4: Resources I accessed through the Library (e.g. journal articles) helped me to understand the core concepts of the module.
- q5: I was satisfied with the opportunities I had to attend tutorials (either face to face or online).
- q6: Sufficient opportunities were provided to check my understanding on the module, for example by completing iCMAs or TMAs.
- q7: The instructions on how to complete the assessed tasks were easy to follow.
- q8: It was obvious how the module materials related to the assessed tasks on this module.
- q9: There was enough time in the study planner to prepare for the end of module assessment.
- q10: Contact from my tutor at the start of the module helped me get started with my studies.
- q11: I could get in touch with my tutor when necessary.
- q12: I was satisfied with the support provided by my tutor on this module.
- q13: My tutor encouraged me in my studies.
- q14: My tutor used a friendly/personal tone in feedback on my assessed tasks.
- q15: My tutors feedback on assessed tasks explained the mark that I received.
- q16: My tutors feedback on assessed tasks helped me prepare for the next assessment.
- q17: My tutors feedback on assessed tasks helped me to learn.
- q18: My tutor supported me in developing professional or work-related skills.
- q19: I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my module.
- q20: I have a clear idea about my next module choice.
- q21: I was satisfied with the quality of the module.

- q22: I would recommend OU study to other students.
- q23: My studies have helped me develop my self-confidence.

### 3 Additional Questions

1. If you answered Disagree to any of the statements above, we would like to understand why so we can make improvements in the future
2. Do you have any further comments about your teaching, assessment and learning on this module?
3. Do you have any other comments to add about your study experience on this module?

### Answers were:

1. Definitely agree
2. Mostly agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Mostly disagree
5. Definitely disagree
6. Not applicable/used

### Survey Results

Out of 1342 students, only 165 (12%) answered the 23 main questions and 3 additional questions.

### Survey Answers

To highlight areas of concern I focussed on all negative answers to questions in the survey. The following table lists all the questions ordered by % disagreed. % disagreed is an accumulation of answers that were either 'Mainly disagree' and 'Definitely disagree'.

Question	% Disagreed from 165 Responses
q9:There was enough time in the study planner to prepare for the end of module assessment.	8.5%
q10:Contact from my tutor at the start of the module helped me get started with my studies.	6.1%
q12:I was satisfied with the support provided by my tutor on this module.	6.1%
q2:The study workload on this module fitted with my personal circumstances.	5.5%
q5:I was satisfied with the opportunities I had to attend tutorials (either face to face or online).	5.5%
q11:I could get in touch with my tutor when necessary.	5.5%
q13:My tutor encouraged me in my studies.	5.5%
q17:My tutors feedback on assessed tasks helped me to learn.	5.5%
q3:The structure of the module meant I could interact with my peers when learning.	4.8%
q15:My tutors feedback on assessed tasks explained the mark that I received.	4.8%
q6:Sufficient opportunities were provided to check my understanding on the module, for example by completing iCMAs or TMAs.	4.2%
q16:My tutors feedback on assessed tasks helped me prepare for the next assessment.	4.2%
q18:My tutor supported me in developing professional or work-related skills.	4.2%

q7:The instructions on how to complete the assessed tasks were easy to follow.	3.6%
q23:My studies have helped me develop my self-confidence.	3.6%
q4:Resources I accessed through the Library (e.g. journal articles) helped me to understand the core concepts of the module.	3.0%
q14:My tutor used a friendly/personal tone in feedback on my assessed tasks.	3.0%
q20:I have a clear idea about my next module choice.	3.0%
q1:The way the module materials were presented helped to maintain my interest.	2.4%
q8:It was obvious how the module materials related to the assessed tasks on this module.	1.8%
q19:I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my module.	1.8%
q21:I was satisfied with the quality of the module.	1.8%
q22:I would recommend OU study to other students.	1.8%

The survey asked “If you answered Disagree to any of the statements above, we would like to understand why so we can make improvements in the future?” This question had 61 answers of value, excluding answers such as None, No, N/A etc... 61 results is only 4.5% student feedback.

Of the 61 answers, 38 answers (62%) contained negative feedback, the answers are listed below:

1. Often only allowed one week for preparation and completion of assignments, with this being a part time module i would have expected a little longer perhaps incase of something happening at work which could waylay time for assignment work

2. Whilst everything in the previous section was great, I am not a fan of having to interact on the forums. I am happy to read opinions and contribute but I don't like there being a mark attributed to it.
3. I found the forums quite tedious - the requirement to reply twice to forum posts just led to huge amounts of waffle and I don't feel I really got much from them because of that.
4. Feedback provided by tutor was not always clear and when asked for more of an explanation - the same comments were repeated.
5. My tutor was really helpful and got back to queries promptly and helped me to focus my attention where it needed to be. The course was very well presented and gave me plenty of opportunity to better my understanding, my only issue with it is the other students... They were not necessarily very friendly or helpful on some of the private groups set up as support and often ridiculed others for asking questions, it was awkward, my point being that everything from the OU was brilliant for purpose but there was a distinct lack of peer support.
6. Relating to the TGFs - student participation was extremely low for the emTMA 05 and earlier TGF activities. It makes peer to peer learning and development really difficult. I'm not sure how to improve it as I imagine it's symptomatic of distance learning.
7. Not enough time between the emTMA online tutorials and the submitting date. Only 8 days between the first tutorial and the actual date. It would have been nice to have at least 15 days.
8. I feel towards the end of the module there was a lot less participation from other students in the group forums making it very difficult to hold discussions with other students.
9. Everything was great, the only thing worth mentioning was that I never received marked assignments within the 10 working days. Maybe tutors have too many assessments to mark.
10. Not many possibilities to attend tutorials in Wales
11. I struggled with the tutorials as I could not attend any due to disability and the sound of the online tutorials affected my disability. I did enquire if I could receive written versions, but was told this wasn't possible and I should use the recorded tutorials. This was obviously the same as viewing the live ones. I made my way through the module not using tutorials in the end, but felt at a disadvantage.

12. I think the online tutorials relating to the TMAs should be available to attend sooner, rather than 1 week or a few days before the submission date. They are helpful, but would be more helpful if you had more time to digest and use the guidance fully.
13. I did not disagree with anything, however one of the things I would improve was the availability of tutorials. They mostly were on evenings and rarely on fridays. My available time was mornings and anytime friday. This changed mid-module due to change of work. I could look back at recorded tutorials, but that meant I had to book a place in one so that I could see it, because if I hadn't booked a tutorial, I could not see the recording of it. Hope it makes sense.
14. Between my work, studies and family, time was not on my side
15. The time was not enough for the study planner
16. I was attending one tutorial and the tutor didn't show up and there was no easy way of checking what was happening. It was all sorted in the end but it may be worth incorporating some sort of contact ability for students to get in touch with the tutor if it is different to their own tutor.
17. There were not a lot of face to face tutorials in my area and the online ones tended to be on the same days all the time so you couldn't always attend them.
18. It was very frustrating when asking something of the tutor and he would get back with a cheeky comment or another question but never an answer or explanation. Also he went on holidays 2 weeks prior to last TMA and didn't give us much choice but not have any clarifications
19. Although opportunities were provided through the forums for students to interact, they were not used well by the students which was occasionally frustrating for those of us who needed to keep ahead of the curve due to full-time study. Increasing the number of students by combining tutor groups for forum activities may make the interaction better. Maybe 2 groups together?
20. Deducting points for not posting in the forum tasks would encourage more interaction.
21. The final tutorial was too late in the course which left minimal time to get planned and ask the tutor if there were any misunderstandings. Tutor was very slow getting back if there were any problems and TMAs were often marked after the 10 working day turnaround

22. There was very little interaction from my Tutor group on our forum activities. I would have been good for the tutor to have been more active on the forum and address this problem. We were being assessed on our contribution and interaction - this was hard to do when the majority of the group did not participate and those who did left it until just a few hours before the deadline.
23. Most of the time the study planner only allowed a week to complete assessments and If i was to follow the study planner exactly as it is, there would nto be enough time to complete most assessments. You do get guidance to start early but following strictly the study planner i dont believe it gives enough time
24. usually only 1 week allowed on the planner - I foudn too little time to fully complete a TMA satisfactorily. TMA support tutorials also tended to be quite late on also
25. I think you need more tutorial opportunities with a variety of times And a few more days for emTMA
26. I tried to get ahead with some modules however was pushed back by lectures/ online study groups being last minute which led to rushing my TMAs.. I only had contact for my tutor twice throughout my first year so I didnt have much help with my first year.
27. Sometimes different tutors were more thorough than others and sometimes the inconsistencies were apparent with having different tutors for the tutorials etc.
28. The additional guidelines received from the tutor were far too late. I am aware that some tutors provide the hints and tips weeks in advance which is more useful. I wish mine did this instead of drip feeding near the end.
29. I believe more varied TGF postings would be great, as they help inspire and maintain interest in the modules being learnt - this was where I lost interest in posting on the TGF as many of the posts were very repetitive.
30. time was of a major issue as in coincides with another ongoing module as well as in reality the shift working hours in pizza hut is demanding
31. The face to face events were too far away for me to attend as I have limited funds to pay for travel etc. because I am unemployed. The timing of the on-line tutorials assisting with the preparation of the tmas were too late and too close to the deadlines.
32. I was unable to attend any of the face to face tutorials, and almost all of the online tutorails were in the evening, which meant I couldnt attend those either. I was only able to attend one tutorial through the whole module, as it was held in the afternoon.

I appreciate though that most other peoples schedules will allow them to be free in the evenings. I was glad that the tutorials were recorded, as I had the opportunity to watch them back later.

33. Tutorials were not directly relevant to the TMA questions but skirted around with other course materials. Most other students had their marked TMAs back before me, as they were vocal about it on the forum and it added to the anxiety of waiting to the deadline marking date for mine.
34. I thought that the tutour feedback for the TMAS was good but I would have been interested to know exactly what I was missing perhaps in a model answer to the question ?
35. I believe my tutor could never give me an answer as to why she marked my work as she did and when encouraging me to improve would say such ridiculous things as "improve the economy of your writing" which really doesnt aid me in any way due to how vague it is. I would prefer to receive comments that are constructive and can be worked on. Overall this made me lose interest and feel quite unhappy in my studies as it felt like no matter how hard I tried I couldnt get a single positive comment or constructive criticism. When I followed what it said to do in the dassignment guide, she would say it wasnt necessary and marked me down. This and more is why i was very underwhelmed. I also found the tutorials rather boring, as they always focus on the same angles of explaining what the book has already explained instead of teaching us how to analyze the information correctly, showing us the kinds of things we need to look for etc.
36. Overall, I found the teaching to be very helpful. Only issues I had with peer to peer interaction was when some forum activities were fairly inactive. I found myself being the conversation starter and only a select few peers were as active. The majority left forum activities to the last minute. Peer to peer interaction can help to drill home content learnt on the module, I personally find it helpful to talk through theories learnt within someone else on a similar level as opposed to a text book or online material.
37. I'm pretty sure that I have already completed this survey but I have been emailed saying you have not received my response. I found it difficult to manage the pace of study with my full time employment. I do not feel I have benefitted from the study as



I have been most stressed about achieving TMA grades. I am not looking forward to my next modules.

38. This module was very heavily focused of peer collaboration. I stopped attending tutorials, as there were no value from them. I would like to hear of what my tutor who has a lot more knowledge of the subject thinks about the specific matter and to hear him/her talk to us about the modules, on important issues and give us tips for studying. Instead all tutorials were focused on peers speaking to each other, rarely any student would switch on their microphone, so students just end up giving their opinions in chat, which is not ideal at all, as most wont be typing all of their thoughts and responses were very limited. Same goes for the mandatory group forum participation, which has 10% of the marks allocated towards it. In my forum group, one or two students post a response, and another tutor contributed the most. It is sad to think that i will lose 8-10% of my marks, because this system fails. It would be great if the OU could recognise that not everyone is comfortable with working in online group forums, and whilst it is great for people who want to do it optionally, it does not work as mandatory requirement. Through out the course i never had a response from a fellow student and never had an opportunity to engage in the matter further, therefore i was unable to expand on my TMA5 question in regards to forum participation and ultimately losing marks yet again. I am quite unhappy in this sense, i would prefer if i had an option besides participating in forums, maybe take on an additional question instead.

Entering the text of the 38 negative comments into a word cloud generator produced the following results, the following table of words all had a count of 4 or more.

47	tutorials
44	forum
34	tutor
26	time
21	TMA

14	students
8	attend
8	study
7	module
6	interaction
6	planner
4	modules



The data shows there are some key themes emerging:

- The need to review the course calendar
- Forum activity to be revised
- Tutorial scheduling to be updated

## **Theme 1: Course Calendar**

The way the course calendar falls can have a big impact for students completing TMA05 with 19B students having 2 weeks less than 18J students. This is significant. Feedback in the SEAM highlighted that one week to complete an assignment was not enough, particularly alongside work pressures. Students commented on how having only 1 week to complete a TMA was not enough.

## **Theme 2: Forum Activity**

Participation in forum activity was low and those that did take part did not enjoy the experience and found it frustrating that there was no one to collaborate with. It was also frustrating for students who need to work ahead of the course calendar because of studying more than one module in parallel. A lack of participation made peer-to-peer feedback difficult. The forum activities are disliked by students and they are completing them for the sake of it and students find the experience tedious. They disliked that forum activity was compulsory and that it was compulsory to reply to two forum posts, which one student said “led to huge amounts of waffle and I don’t feel I really got much from them because of that”.

Students were uninspired by Tutors’ involvement in the TGF. Posts were repetitive and Tutor communication did little to inspire, motivate and generate interest in the topics being studied.

## **Theme 3: Tutorials**

Students found the online tutorials all ran at a similar time and day. They would like to see more variety in when online tutorials are held so that they can attend live, rather than listening to a recording. They would also like to see more face-to-face tutorials.

Students disliked the tutorials being so heavily focused on peer-to-peer collaboration. They wanted to learn from the tutor facilitator and were frustrated by the format, as students did not like switching on their microphone and the tutorial ended up being a lot of text chat amongst peers.

### 5.3 Comparison of B100 and BXY100

This section reviews the characteristics and academic performance between B100 and BXY100 in 18J and 19B presentations.

	<b>B100</b>		<b>BXY 100</b>	
	<b>2018J</b>	<b>2019B</b>	<b>2018J</b>	<b>2019B</b>
<b>Results (%)</b>				
Formal Withdrawal	12	10	12	8
Didn't submit EMA (?)	18	23	2	4
<b>Qualification aims (% pass at 25% liability point)</b>				
Q91	64	61		
Q67	67	58		
QD	68	59		
T27	72	60		
W51	69	46		
<b>Concurrent study</b>				
None	60	60		
Up to 30 pts at module start	53	52		
Up to 30 pts after module start	71	50		

BXY100 students are not only educated at higher levels (e.g. 30% compared to 13% on B100 in 18J), but are also older (31% of them were 40 years of age or older compare to 15% of B100 students in 18J), are more likely to be White British, less likely to belong to lower socio-economic group and have a declared disability in comparison to B100.

Not surprisingly then BXY100 students outperformed B100 students – 84% passing the module vs 61% on B100 in 18J and 85% vs 63% in 19B and there seems to be a clear link between student characteristics and their chances of passing/ completing the module.

TMA submission rates were also quite different across the two modules, for example, in 19B 87% of B100 students submitted their first TMA (of those who were registered at the 25% liability point and so less than 79% of those registered at the module start) compared to 98% of BXY100 students. There was a higher dropout rate for all TMAs on B100 compared to BXY100 in both 18J and 19B, except TMA 05, where both cohorts have lost between 3 to 5 % of submissions compared to TMA 04. This would suggest that is unlikely that it is student characteristics that can explain attrition in the later stages of the module

Official withdrawals on B100 were at a higher rate compared to BXY100 – 22% in 18J compared to 12% (which is also quite a few). 82 students have withdrawn, which is a small percentage of the total number and there were 68 deferrals.

- 52 students (63.41%) withdrew for personal reasons
- 6 students (7.32%) withdrew in order to reduce study
- 4 students (4.88%) withdrew for Normal reasons (it is not clear what this term means)
- 20 students (24.4%) withdrew for reasons stated as 'Other'

There is a clear trend, where students in their 30s and older, those with qualifications of A level or above, low economic status and ethnic minority students are less likely to pass B100. Those who get to submit TMA 05 are usually very likely to pass (more than 90% and often well over 90% do).

B100 has a reasonable balance of male and female students, with a slightly higher percentage being female. It is encouraging to see so many younger students see B100 as a good option for their futures. The majority of students are aged between 21 – 40. The highest age range is 25-29, at 24.37% (406 students). This is followed by the 21-24 age range at 23.59% (393

students).10.40% of students are aged 18-20 (173 students). There are only 3 students aged over 60 years old. Most students are in full- or part-time employment. Full-time: 57.02% (950 students), 16.69% (278 students). 14.59% of students (243) have registered a disability.36 students have stipulated that they are carers.

Educational qualifications are likely to have an impact on how the module team decide to pitch the module. The majority of students have less than 2 A-levels (655 students).421 students have a qualification equal to two A Levels. 225 students have A level qualifications.54 students have no formal qualifications. The majority of students are studying only one module. However, 327 students are studying 90 credits, and 182 are studying 120 credits. The majority of students are studying for the BA (Hons) Business Management.

## 6. Associate Lecturer Feedback

Feedback from ALs centred around 4 key themes:

- AL/ Student interaction
- Assessment
- Course Progression
- Study skills support

### 6.1 AL / Student Interaction

ALs report that it is very difficult to develop relationships with students under the new group tuition policy. Anecdotal evidence suggests students do not participate as much, since this policy was implemented. Contact between AL and individual students is overestimated. Personal contact generally only occurs if there are problems.

## 6.2 Assessment

ALs report that the level of language of the case studies chosen for TMAs is often very complex, using lots of colloquialisms which make them inaccessible to people with English as a second language and others.

ALs feel the inconsistent gaps between TMAs requires review and how the TMAs double in size for the final two TMAs, which can be daunting for students. It was reported that the module cut be cut shorter. "There's a point at which going forwards to the end seems a long way and perhaps unattainable, and looking back seems to have been hard work".

TMA05 part 2 asks students to write reflectively, however, students are not advised on how to do this and there are no reflective writing activities to help students develop this skillset within the module material.

## 6.3 Course Progression

ALs reported that they do not find the latter parts of the module to be difficult, but that the start is easy and the steepness of the learning curve is not adequately signalled. Particular attention was drawn to the ethics block, which ALs feel students find exciting. It was advised that the block needed more tutorial work to really get to grips with the language and the tolerance of ambiguity - one learning point being about the fact that different approaches suggest different "right" answers ie: it is a bit of a baptism in critical thinking about the tools used as well as the case studies they're used on. It would help if ALs with ethics as a specialism ran the tutorials. Stronger links could be made between the Block 6 ethics and the global business ethics material in Block 7.

## 6.4 Student Skills Support

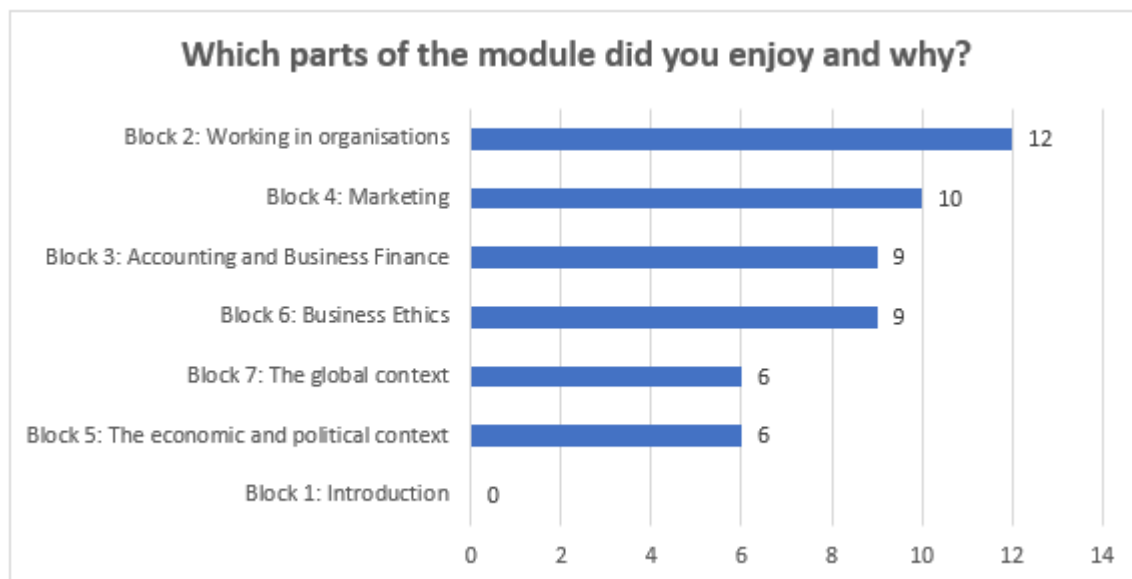
ALs expressed concern about the recruitment of students who would be better suited to taking technical or vocational qualifications and that The Open University is setting students up to fail. ALs felt that there was little support for students with English as a second language, who raised concerns about essay writing in the first tutorial. They expressed the need for clear TMA questions and guidance notes. ALs also highlighted the need for The Open University to limit the number of concurrent modules being studied by students to support retention.

## 7. Student Interviews and Focus Group

A set of eighteen questions were asked to all students taking part in the one-to-one interviews and focus groups. Students who did not successfully complete B100 attended a one-to-one interview with the Researcher. The same set of questions were asked of successful students who attended a focus group. A distinction has not been made between the answers of successful students to unsuccessful students because there were no distinctive features to differentiate them. The reasons for students not completing B100 from those interviewed, were due to life-changing factors that were outside of the course.

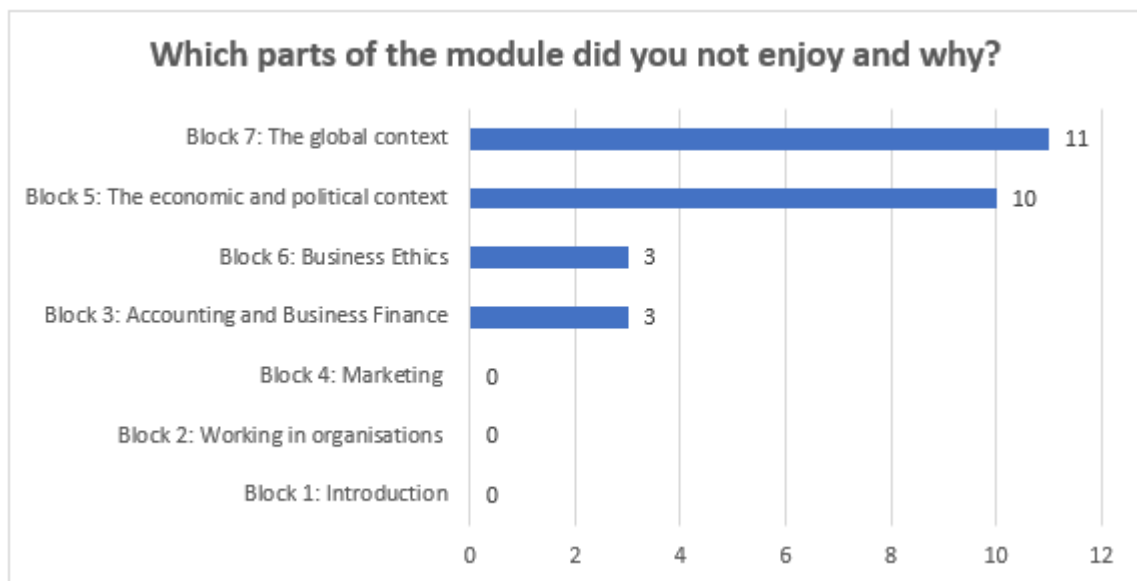


## 7.1 Which parts of the module did you enjoy and why?



Students enjoyed blocks 2, 3, 4 and 6 the most but they genuinely expressed that they enjoyed all of the course. Students felt they could relate what they were learning to their own work and businesses. Block 2 was most enjoyed by students because of learning about a wide variety of organisations. 75% of students advised that they were pleasantly surprised that they would enjoy the finance block as much as they did. They found it interesting to learn how companies can be affected by different financial aspects. They enjoyed the way the block was not purely focused on the money side, but other facets, such as planning. Ethics was a new subject which made it enjoyable for students who liked learning about how ethics works in other organisations.

## 7.2 Which parts of the module did you not enjoy and why?



Students enjoyed all of the course, but when pushed highlighted block 7 as the least enjoyable, but stressed this was due to a lack of time and not down to the study material. Students found blocks 5 and 7 difficult to relate to their contexts.

## 7.3 Which topics stretched you the most?



Students discussed how they wished the finance block was spread across the module as a whole, rather than as a separate block. Students felt this would make it less daunting. They

also requested that there were more video resources with the finance block, as the videos aided understanding. They wanted the finance part to be more interactive and felt they would learn more if it was included in all the blocks, rather than as a separate block.

Students reported that block 7 stretched them more because of a lack of time at the end of the course, rather than due to the subject matter.

#### 7.4 Did you get stuck on any point in the module and what did you do?

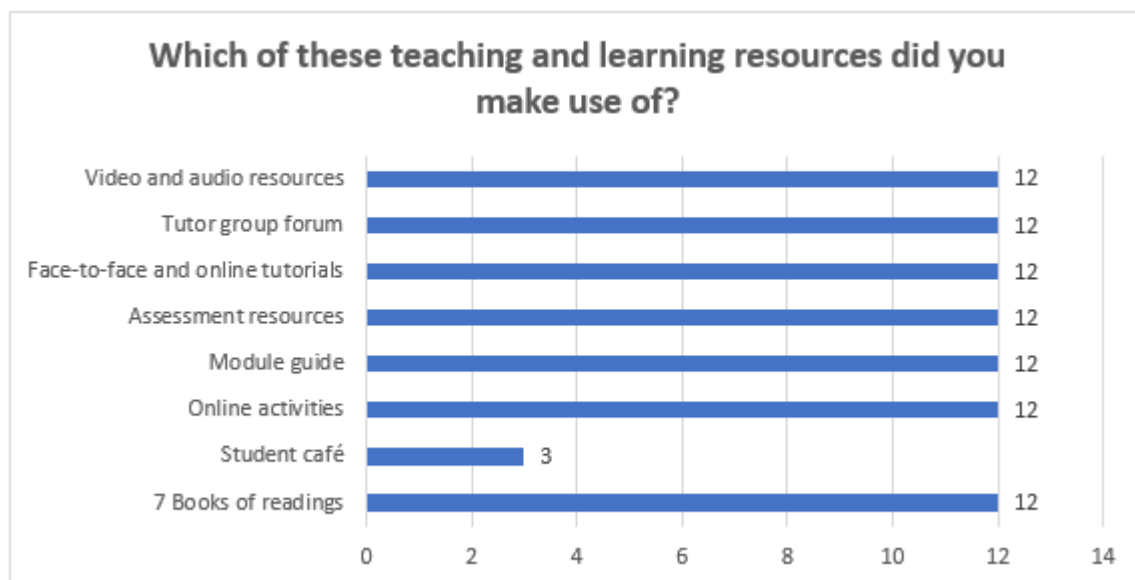
100% of students reported that if they were stuck they would contact their tutor. Students said they would have been stuck had it not been for the face-to-face tutorials. The online tutorials caused more confusion than help. Students said that tutors were not consistent in their guidance which caused confusion. There was a great deal of negativity amongst all the students about online tutorials. The following issues were highlighted:

- The online tutorial recordings are not accessible and do not have a transcript.
- Online tutorials were held on similar days and at similar times which did not provide flexibility to students
- Online tutorials are held too close to the TMA deadline and should be held at least 2 weeks before an assignment is due.
- Students preferred to attend live online tutorials, rather than listening to a recording
- Students cannot access online tutorial recordings without having been booked on them. They want the online recordings to be available, regardless of whether they have booked or not.
- Students disliked the format of the online tutorials where the ALs are facilitating peer-to-peer feedback. Students did not feel they learned from the tutorials and wanted to learn from the experienced ALs. They disliked how the tutorials end up being a long stream of text chat, because students do not want to talk using the microphone. They want AL led tutorials. Many students stopped attending tutorials because they didn't feel they gained anything from them. Students if they could attend a face-to-face tutorial did so, as they gained a lot from attending. Many students disliked being disadvantaged by not being close to a face-to-face location.

## 7.5 What could we (the tutors and central team) have done that would have helped you to overcome difficulties in the module?

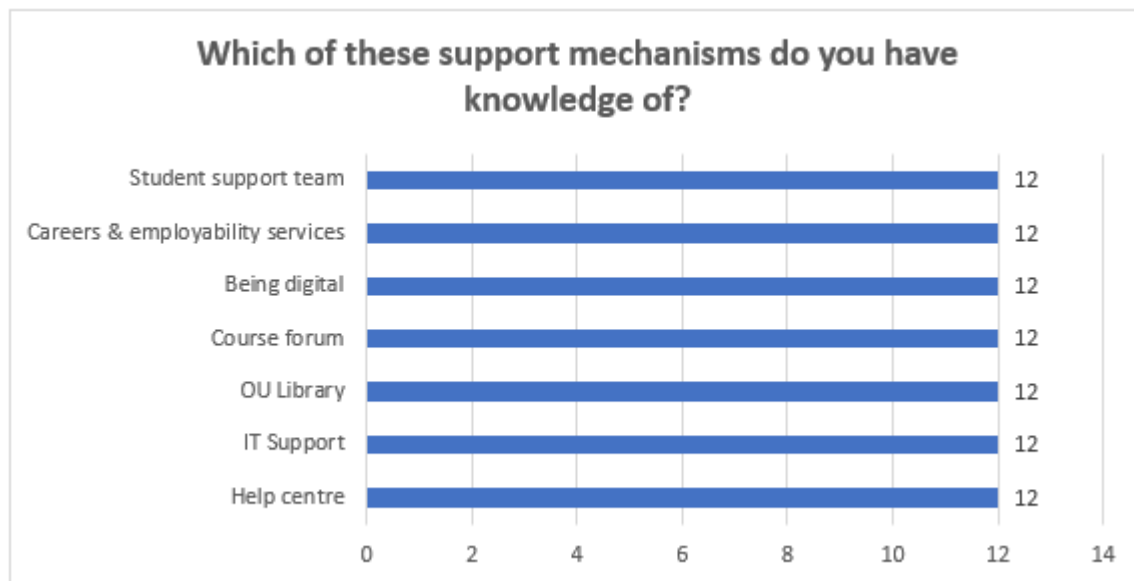
All students both successful and unsuccessful in completing B100 were highly complementary of The Open University and the B100 course and team. The students expressed that they felt highly supported with additional support teams too, such as IT.

## 7.6 Which of these teaching and learning resources did you make use of? Which were effective for your learning?



Students made use of all the learning resources available to them, with the exception of the student café. Students advised the café forum did not appeal to them. They felt it was a waste of their time and they wanted to focus on the importance of the course material.

### 7.7 Which of these support mechanisms do you have knowledge of? Which have you used?



Students made use of all the support mechanisms available to them and were aware of all the support provided to them. All students were highly appreciative of what was offered to OU students.

### 7.8 Did you feel that forum activities helped you learn? How much use did you make of the general TGF? How much use of the activity forums? What inhibited your usage?

Participation in forum activity was low and those that did take part did not enjoy the experience and found it frustrating that there was no one to collaborate with. It was also frustrating for students who need to work ahead of the course calendar because of studying more than one module in parallel. A lack of participation made peer-to-peer feedback difficult. The forum activities are disliked by students and they are completing them for the sake of it and students find the experience tedious. They disliked that forum activity was compulsory and that it was compulsory to reply to two forum posts, which one student said "led to huge amounts of waffle and I don't feel I really got much from them because of that". Students felt the forum activity was fake and they were posting something just for the sake of

it which they felt wasted everyone's time. Students said some forum posts would distract them and lead them down a wrong path and they would start comparing themselves against other students. Students did not feel forum instructions were clear and they did not know if they were writing too much or too little.

Students were uninspired by Tutors' involvement in the TGF. Posts were repetitive and Tutor communication did little to inspire, motivate and generate interest in the topics being studied.

Students advised that participation could be improved, if students were given guidance on using the forums and given access to smaller groups and activities to begin with to support those students who were technophobes or suffered with anxiety. Students find it very daunting and embarrassing to post on a forum in case they make a fool of themselves. They don't want to get it wrong.

### 7.9 Why do you think students who have satisfactory performance on the module, (pass) up to TMA 05, fail to submit their final assessment. Did you submit your TMA? If no, what were your reasons?

Students attending the focus group who had successfully completed B100 could find no reason for students to drop out of the course.

100% of students attending the one-to-one interviews, who had not successfully completed B100 all reported that they plan to return to The Open University as soon as they can. All students reported that they were unable to successfully complete B100 due to life changing circumstances. Many students were experiencing a number of factors that were preventing them from continuing with B100 and all of them expressed a great sadness that they were not able to complete. The decision to leave the course had not been taken lightly. Students gave reasons of being promoted, travelling with work, working long hours whilst balancing other factors, such as relationship breakups, having a baby, starting a new business, getting married, moving house, being treated for serious medical conditions in hospital.

### 7.10 How did you feel you had done on the other assignments?

Students performed as they had expected on assignments and felt they had performed well.

### 7.11 What do you feel in terms of the difficulty of blocks 1-4 as compared to blocks 5-7?

Students advised that they would benefit from more audio and video material to aid understanding, particularly for complex finance topics and subjects that are new to them, such as ethics.

### 7.12 What do you perceive as barriers to learning throughout the module?

100% of students reported a lack of time as the main barrier to learning.

### 7.13 What do you aim to do following B100?

All students plan to complete a degree with The Open University. Those that have left, hope to return as soon as they can. Some students reported studying shorter courses that related to the subject, in the interim.

### 7.14 Did you feel the TMAs were consistent in terms of look and feel? What measures / enhancements could we adopt?

Students felt the TMAs were consistent, but the tutorials were not due to varying guidance being provided by ALs other than their tutor. Students said that in the end, they avoided tutorials and focused on using the TMA guidance notes to help reduce their confusion and anxiety. Students advised that it was the language that some ALs use that is difficult to make sense of.

Students would like greater scope to present TMAs in different formats. Some students advised they found essay writing difficult and would prefer to orally present or create a video file.

### 7.15 Are there actions The Open University should take in terms of content in blocks 5-7 that would have helped you and improved your student experience, whilst still adhering to existing learning outcomes and accreditation of learning?

Students advised that they'd like to receive a short amount of feedback on the activities throughout the course, just so that they know they are on the right track. They would like tutors to have sight of their notes for comment.

They'd like to feel less pressure on TMAs by being asked to submit micro-assessments, such as five questions that they need to answer and receive feedback on prior to a TMA. They then know they are on the right track and feel less stress about completing a shorter assignment. They'd like some informal questions. Students expressed that they did not naturally write and didn't want all the emphasis to be on a written essay. They felt assessments should be more open to different formats.

In a study by Cross et al (2015) called 'Student Experience of Feedback, Assessment and Revision', 86% of students said they would find it helpful to talk to their tutor about TMA feedback, and 77% would find it helpful to receive feedback on TMA drafts in addition to their final script (Cross et al 2015, p2). This supports the findings from this research where students expressed the desire to have more support for TMA assessments by being asked to answer preliminary questions and receive feedback from their tutor prior to a TMA.

When students were asked for their opinion (Cross et al, 2015) on three alternative types of tutor-led assessment (feedback on TMA draft; feedback given as audio or video; opportunity to talk to tutor about feedback), 77.3% of students said that they would find feedback on draft 'very helpful' or 'helpful', and 85.7% would welcome an opportunity to talk to their tutor about their feedback. The audio/video option, on the other hand, was less popular among respondents, with only 25.8% finding that option 'very helpful' or 'helpful'.



### 7.16 What did you find most difficult /relevant within the module material for B100?

In general, students did not have any difficulty. They advised that they would like to have more video explanations in the finance module. They also would like to have film recommendations that demonstrate what they are learning.

### 7.17 What did you find were the pros and cons of B100 and its assessments?

Students had nothing additional to add that had not already been discussed. Several students who had not completed the module, reported how the course had a wider impact on their working, for example, listening to Radio 4 and reading newspapers and continuing to do so after the module is over.

### 7.18 What advice would you give to someone new to this module?

Students would advise to print off the assignments in advance to have in the back of their minds as they study the block and to go to the face-to-face tutorials, wherever possible, as they are really useful. Students liked how going to the face-to-face tutorial helped them catchup as the tutors would explain the material. They gained a lot of benefits from attending and did not feel under pressure to be on track, in order, to attend, which was in contrast to online tutorials. Students advised that you have to stay on top of the timetable. There's no scope to fall behind.

*Students express more dissatisfaction with assessment and feedback than with any other aspect of their learning experience, according to the National Student Survey (HEFCE, 2016a).*



## 8 Recommendations

### 8.1 Theme 1: Assessment

#### 8.1.1 Develop a Systematic Assessment Literacy Programme

There is potential for a much more systematic assessment literacy programme to equip students with the necessary understanding of assessment processes, as well as, that which is related to content. The OU does not currently have a full overview of its assessment activity and the implications of submission peaks on administrative support, IT systems and implications for students where they student concurrent modules with clashing deadlines.

Students tick off each module in turn and fail to see the links between them. Associate Lecturers can be similarly focused on their own module responsibilities and do not have the mechanisms to view previous feedback and feedforward from prior modules. This method can fragment learning. Students receive feedback on a module, then it stops and they move onto the next one with a new Associate Lecturer who knows nothing about what the feedback was and whether the student is acting upon the feedback from the previous module. There's no system to enable continuity.

#### 8.1.2 Develop micro-assessments

There is a strong focus on traditional assessment format, such as essays on B100 and the lack of flexibility is seen as a weakness. Traditional methods are not necessarily the best means of testing students in the achievement of learning outcomes nor are they necessarily creating the best work-ready students with the right skills to demonstrate to employers.

Students do not have choice and variety to demonstrate their assessment and learning, nor are they able to take advantage of a wide range of digital technology to suit their preferences.

There is strong evidence that we do need to pause and reflect on the processes and practices which underpin assessment - and feedback practices.

Students advised that they'd like to receive a short amount of feedback on the activities throughout the course, just so that they know they are on the right track. They would like tutors to have sight of their notes for comment.

They'd like to feel less pressure on TMAs by being asked to submit micro-assessments, such as five questions that they need to answer and receive feedback on prior to a TMA. They then know they are on the right track and feel less stress about completing a shorter assignment. They'd like some informal questions. Students expressed that they did not naturally write and didn't want all the emphasis to be on a written essay. They felt assessments should be more open to different formats.

### 8.1.3 Develop Modern Assessment Formats

Utilise digital technology and embed in curriculum design to provide personal choice to students on how they produce their assessed work and create interesting and novel formats for students to engage in their learning and think differently about assessment, whilst also encouraging creativity, collaborative working, problem-solving and inquisitive enquiry. Both ALs and students expressed the difficulty of completing essays, particularly for the calibre of students on B100 and those who are studying with English as a second language. Students advised they had the ability to complete the assessments, but when it came to putting words on paper they struggled, whereas if they were offered alternative ways to demonstrate their understanding of the learning outcomes, they could do this via alternative formats, such as, submitting an MP3 file or writing a set of blog posts. Students advised they had done this when studying other qualifications external to The Open University, for example, with The Institute of Leadership and Management.

Students also reported that they'd like to have more videos and interactive activities, particularly for the finance and ethics blocks. They'd also like to be recommended films to watch, so they can see the concepts they are studying in other contexts.

#### 8.1.4 Build a system to enable continuity of feedback and feedforward

Investigate a moodle reporting tool plugin on the VLE so Associate Lecturers can draw upon past feedback, as well as, students to progress their learning journey and assessment career, to create an ongoing dialogue for assessment.

Develop an online portfolio of work that can be utilised by Associate Lecturers with their students so students have some ideas about how to act on feedback.

#### 8.1.5 Carry out regular audits to improve assessment

Carry out audits using TESTA's guidance, which is a method utilised by many HEIs across the UK. See TESTA's (2016a) guidance on revised assessment patterns that work and 10 steps to auditing a programme (TESTA, 2016b).

### 8.2 Theme 2: Course Calendar

2019B saw a worse submission rate with "TMA submission less than 75%" occurring for TMA03 onwards. In 2018J, this red alert occurred from TMA04 onwards. In this presentation there is a week less time to complete TMA03, this could be the cause of the low submission value. In this presentation there is also less time to complete TMA05 as the presentation ends on week 32, two weeks earlier than the 2018J presentation. This could have a significant impact on students' ability to submit the final TMA. 2 weeks can make all the difference. Adjusting the course calendar could have a major impact on retention, submission rates and grades.

The OU does not currently have a full overview of its assessment activity and the implications of submission peaks on administrative support, IT systems and implications for students where they study concurrent modules with clashing deadlines. Carrying out this activity would support students who are studying more than one module. Stagger TMA and EMA deadlines where modules are likely to be studied concurrently.

Students reported that having only one week to complete a TMA is not enough time.

ALs feel the inconsistent gaps between TMAs requires review and how the TMAs double in size for the final two TMAs, which can be daunting for students. It was reported that the module cut be cut shorter. “There's a point at which going forwards to the end seems a long way and perhaps unattainable, and looking back seems to have been hard work”.

TMA05 part 2 asks students to write reflectively, however, students are not advised on how to do this and there are no reflective writing activities to help students develop this skillset within the module material.

### 8.3 Theme 3: Forums

The current format of using forums needs to address the issues raised by students.

Participation in forum activity was low and those that did take part did not enjoy the experience and found it frustrating that there was no one to collaborate with. It was also frustrating for students who need to work ahead of the course calendar because of studying more than one module in parallel. A lack of participation made peer-to-peer feedback difficult. The forum activities are disliked by students and they are completing them for the

sake of it and students find the experience tedious. They disliked that forum activity was compulsory and that it was compulsory to reply to two forum posts, which one student said “led to huge amounts of waffle and I don’t feel I really got much from them because of that”.

Students were uninspired by Tutors’ involvement in the TGF. Posts were repetitive and Tutor communication did little to inspire, motivate and generate interest in the topics being studied.

Students felt the forum activity was fake and they were posting something just for the sake of it which they felt wasted everyone’s time. Students said some forum posts would distract them and lead them down a wrong path and they would start comparing themselves against other students. Students did not feel forum instructions were clear and they did not know if they were writing too much for too little.

Students advised that participation could be improved, if students were given guidance on using the forums and given access to smaller groups and activities to begin with to support those students who were technophobes or suffered with anxiety. Students find it very daunting and embarrassing to post on a forum in case they make a fool of themselves. They don’t want to get it wrong.

B100 does not widely utilise social networking, such as, Twitter and Facebook to encourage students in developing their own assessment, feedback and feed forward practice. In fact, social networking is designed very little into course module for collaborative working, assessment and feed forward. It is recommended this is introduced with Associate Lecturers recruited to manage sites. This may be a method to overcome some of the issues highlighted by students.

It is recommended that there are less forum activities and that they are reshaped to have more meaning and for students to feel they are worthwhile, rather than a box-ticking exercise.

It is recommended that the B100 team examine strategies on other B-modules, for example B208 and integrating forum activities more closely into the teaching and strengthening some of the instructions so that it's clear to students what they do in the forum. Another possibility would be to add some more exercises or activities (e.g. quizzes). This would also address students' desire to have more micro-assessments (see section 8.1.2). B208 have assessment builder activities which may be useful for B100 to adopt.

In order to address the lack of participation, join forum groups together or operate module wide forum activities. This would also allow for students who are working ahead of the module calendar to receive response from other peers who are doing likewise.

## 8.4 Theme 4: Induction and Study Skills Support

### 8.4.1 Writing Skills Support

Learn from other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by offering a regular programme (often HEIs offer this weekly) of workshops for skills development and support for examination, for example: making the most of feedback, note-taking, avoiding plagiarism, successful group-working, reading and researching. Solutions to support students in developing their writing could be:

- Writers in Residence (could ALs who are published writers be of assistance?)
- Bath University provide daily drop-in sessions over 3-hour periods.
- Distance learners supported through Microsoft Teams / Adobe Connect



- Drop-in sessions of 50 minutes for planning and structuring assignments, developing arguments, integrating resources, proof reading and other academic writing skills.

#### 8.4.2 Induction skills development for new students

Students are always eager to begin their learning journey. Before students start their course, the OU could utilise this time to help students identify their learning preferences and help them discover how technology can aid their study. It is recommended that The Open University develops an active pre-induction online community where students can meet, speak to existing students and staff, take virtual tours and begin building their digital identity and start their e-portfolio / CV for life. Before students start their course, learners would know what digital content and services are available and how they can log in and start being fed with news and messages, bite size introductory work pieces, quizzes and receive motivational messages and handy hints and tips before they start etc. The Open University has developed a wide range of useful resources, such as The Open University Library's digital skills and the student skills toolkit, which would be useful starting foundations for new students. It is recommended that the development of skills to support the use of digital technology for assessment practice is reviewed for both Associate Lecturers and Students. This could also address students' recommendations (see section 8.3) to be supported in building confidence in using OU forums.

#### 8.4.3 Develop Reflective Skills

TMA05 part 2 asks students to write reflectively, however, students are not advised on how to do this and there are no reflective writing activities to help students develop this skillset within the module material. Students could utilise the OU blog platform as a means to support their reflective writing. This could also be incorporated into the writing skills support recommended in section 8.4.1.

B100 could make more use of online digital tools and technology to develop assessment literacy and engage students to work more collaboratively in assessing their peers work.

Utilising technology enables students to work anonymously online to build their confidence, as they don't always respect their own ability to assess their peers. This helps them to perform better in their own work because if they are able to critically evaluate other students' work, they can critically evaluate their own work better. The act of giving feedback is cognitively demanding, engages students more actively and they spend time thinking about the criteria.

#### 8.4.4 Introduce a Portfolio and Blog that travels with the Student for their whole learning journey

Provide the mechanism for students to keep a portfolio and blog which travels with OU students throughout their learning journey. Support students in gaining professional memberships to support career development and incorporate the use of the portfolio in self-reflection assessment activity and enable learners to capture and reflect on their process of learning.

### 8.5 Theme 5: Tutorials

#### 8.5.1 Online Tutorials

Review tutorial timings to ensure these are scheduled at the right time in the course. Students would like tutorials to be held at least 2 weeks prior to a TMA.

Students found the online tutorials all ran at a similar time and day. They would like to see more variety in when online tutorials are held so that they can attend live, rather than listening to a recording. They would also like to see more face-to-face tutorials.

Students disliked the tutorials being so heavily focused on peer-to-peer collaboration. They wanted to learn from the tutor facilitator and were frustrated by the format, as students did not like switching on their microphone and the tutorial ended up being a lot of text chat amongst peers. Have one tutorial recorded for each module, not all ALs recording all events. This will provide a shorter recording for those unable to attend and enable live tutorials not

to be recorded, which will open up discussion during live sessions without students in fear of being recorded. It also stops the pressure students feel to listen to every recording, which also creates confusion with different language used by ALs. Students preferred to attend live online tutorials, rather than listening to a recording.

Replace the numerous repetitions of the same learning event with sessions at the start of the course to support students from a non-business background. Provide a mini bridge to build confidence in business terms. B100 is interdisciplinary, ask ALs to run tutorials according to their specialisms and strengths. Particular attention was drawn to the ethics block, which ALs feel students find exciting. It was advised that the block needed more tutorial work to really get to grips with the language and the tolerance of ambiguity - one learning point being about the fact that different approaches suggest different "right" answers ie: it is a bit of a baptism in critical thinking about the tools used as well as the case studies they're used on. It would help if ALs with ethics as a specialism ran the tutorials. Stronger links could be made between the Block 6 ethics and the global business ethics material in Block 7.

Ensure that online tutorial recordings are accessible and have a transcript. Also, students cannot access online tutorial recordings without having been booked on them. They want the online recordings to be available, regardless of whether they have booked or not.

### 8.5.2 Face-to-Face Tutorials

The research shows that students very much value face-to-face tutorials. The SEAM data shows that students are disappointed when they are unable to access a tutorial location near to where they live. In the interviews, students preferred face-to-face tutorials to online tutorials.

## 9 References

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